

Houstonia pusilla in Maryland and Virginia

Clyde F. Reed

Houstonia pusilla Schoepf (H. patens Ell.) is a rather small version of our common spring bluet. However, it has a more southern range, reaching its northernmost localities in northeastern Maryland.

In southeastern Virginia, it may be native from the south and that may be its natural northern limit. Collections have been seen from Nansemond, Southampton, Greenville, Amelia and Appomattox Counties, Virginia.

More northern localities in Maryland may have been introduced along with grass seed. In 1951 patches of H. pusilla were found in open wastes near Severna Park in Anne Arundel County, Maryland (April 11, 1951. Reed 23962). This area had been recently graded and seeded with grass.

More recently in 1978, specimens of H. pusilla were handed in to the Botany Department at the University of Maryland in a student's collection (Mary McGuirk), collected on her parent's farm along banks of a stream in open pasture, Thomas Run, 3 mi. E of Hickory, Harford County, Maryland. These specimens were referred to Dr. Edward Terrell (USDA, Beltsville, Md.) who verified the specimens. On May 2, 1979, Dr. Terrell and myself visited the McGuirk Farm along Pennington Road at Thomas Run, and found an abundance of H. pusilla scattered but well-established over a large portion of a permanent pasture. It could well have been introduced a few years ago when the pasture was seeded with grass seed which presumably came from "The South". Collected specimens from the May 2, 1979 visit: Reed 103546 (Reed Herb.) and Ed. Terrell 4997 (US).

This small bluet, 2-5 cm. tall with beautiful blue flowers, is probably more abundant in northern pastures and by-ways where grasses are sown and should be sought in the more bare areas among the grassy patches, especially from late March to mid-April; the May 2 plants were all in fruit.

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